

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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2006 HOUSE DEMO INITIATIVES: PROPERTY TAX RELIEF, PROTECTION OF HOOSIER JOBS AND TIME

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana House Democrats announced today that they will pursue initiatives in 2006 to provide tax relief for Hoosiers, protect them from losing jobs through privatization and outsourcing, and ensure they have a voice in determining what time our state observes.

At a Statehouse press conference today, House Democrat Leader B. Patrick Bauer (D-South Bend) said the program was based on overwhelming public concerns about the direction being taken by Gov. Mitch Daniels and the Republicans who control both the Indiana House and Senate.

"After the first year of the Daniels Administration and Republican rule, Hoosiers have seen fiscal policies enacted that will drastically increase their property taxes, our state's resources put up for auction to the highest bidder, and the public's interest in a debate over time zones in Indiana ignored," Bauer said. "House Democrats will do everything in their power to make sure that all of these critical issues will be thoroughly debated when our work resumes in January 2006."

State Rep. William Crawford (D-Indianapolis) will file legislation calling for all money collected through the state's tax amnesty program – estimated at nearly \$200 million – to be dedicated to the reduction of welfare levies, which are expected to increase by nearly 40 percent statewide.

"Using the tax amnesty money will provide immediate relief to taxpayers across Indiana," Crawford said. "The governor has not clearly stated what he will do with the money, apart from using \$65 million toward the \$1 billion budget balance. It seems only fair that, instead of building up the surplus with money from delinquent taxpayers, we use those funds to give some relief to those well-deserving Hoosiers who have paid their taxes on time."

State Rep. Dave Crooks (D-Washington) will author a bill calling for a public referendum in the 2006 general election that will give Indiana voters a chance to determine whether the state should be in the Eastern or Central Time Zone, except for Clark, Dearborn, Floyd, Harrison and Ohio Counties in Southeast Indiana. If a majority of voters approve the change, the governor will petition the U.S. Department of Transportation to advance the issue.

"In the public hearings on time zone changes that have taken place this year, it is painfully obvious the governor has failed to act on the true public policy decision: whether Indiana should be on Eastern or Central Time," Crooks said. "The only way to proceed on this question is a statewide referendum, which will put this issue to rest once and for all."

Finally, Bauer said State Rep. Joe Micon (D-West Lafayette) will take a leading role in pursuing legislation that will make sure lawmakers have oversight in administration efforts to privatize state operations like the Indiana Toll Road, hospitals, parks, prisons and services for families like the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program. Bauer said these privatization efforts could cost Hoosiers another 4,000 jobs.

"Many have expressed concerns that these programs and assets will be run by private, out-of-state companies, and that the result will be lost jobs and millions of state dollars leaving Indiana," Micon said. "In our role as elected officials, we must strive to make sure that these moves are cost-efficient and improve services, rather than the opposite."